



NRC NEWS

**UNITED STATES NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
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NRC DRAFT REPORT FINDS CATAWBA LICENSE RENEWAL ENVIRONMENTALLY ACCEPTABLE; PUBLIC INPUT SOUGHT AT JUNE MEETINGS

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff is seeking public comment on its preliminary conclusion that there are no environmental impacts that would preclude renewal of the operating licenses for the two reactors at the Catawba nuclear plant in York County, South Carolina.

The information is contained in a draft environmental impact statement on the proposed license renewal. That document is open for public comment until August 23, and will also be the subject of public meetings on Thursday, June 27. Two similar meetings will be held in the Council Chamber at the Rock Hill City Hall, located at 155 Johnston Street in Rock Hill. There will be one session in the afternoon at 1:30 and one in the evening at 7:00. In addition, the NRC staff will host informal discussions one hour prior to each meeting. NRC staff members will be available to answer questions and provide additional information about the process during those informal sessions, but no comments on environmental issues will be accepted then.

The two sessions will begin with identical overviews, including a presentation by NRC staff and its contractors of the contents of the draft supplement to the Generic Environmental Impact Statement. The meeting will then be opened for public comment.

For planning purposes, interested parties are encouraged to pre-register by contacting James Wilson of the NRC by telephone at (800) 368-5642, extension 1108, or by e-mail at CatawbaEIS@nrc.gov no later than June 21. Interested persons may also register to speak before the start of each session. Time for individual comments at the meetings may be limited to accommodate all speakers.

Written comments on the draft supplement to the GEIS will also be considered by NRC staff. Comments should be submitted either by mail to the Chief, Rules and Directives Branch, Division of Administrative Services, Mail Stop T-6 D 59, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC 20555-0001, or by Internet to CatawbaEIS@nrc.gov

The NRC has been reviewing the application for extension of the North Anna licenses since Duke Energy, which operates the plant, filed it in June 2001. Under NRC regulations, the original operating license for a nuclear power plant is issued for up to 40 years. The license may be renewed for up to an additional 20 years if NRC requirements are met. The current licenses for Catawba will expire on December 6, 2024, for Unit 1 and February 24, 2026, for Unit 2.

The possible environmental effects of an additional 20 years of nuclear plant operation are described in the NRC's Generic Environmental Impact Statement, or GEIS (NUREG-1437). The NRC issues a site-specific supplement to the GEIS on each plant requesting license renewal to address the potential environmental impacts. Issues specific to Catawba are addressed in Supplement 9. The NRC staff's preliminary recommendation is that "the Commission determine that the adverse environmental impacts of license renewal for the two units at Catawba are not so great that preserving the option of license renewal for energy-planning decision makers would be unreasonable."

The draft supplement to the GEIS and other related documents are available electronically for public inspection in the NRC Public Document Room at NRC headquarters, 11555 Rockville Pike, Rockville, Maryland; or electronically on the Internet at www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/doc-collections/nuregs/staff/sr1437/supplement9 . In addition, the York County Library, 138 Black Street, Rock Hill has agreed to make the draft supplement to the GEIS available for public inspection.

At the conclusion of the public comment period the NRC staff will consider and address the comments provided and issue a final supplement to the GEIS. That supplement will contain a recommendation regarding the environmental acceptability for license renewal.

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